

Theoretical and Practical Conflict Rehabilitation in the Somali Region of Ethiopia

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The Cross-mandate Policy and Practice

In 1987 relatives of SNM fighters had taken refuge around Harshin in Ethiopia, some 145 km south-east of Jijiga. In 1988, following the SNM militia taking control of Bura'o and Hargeisa, Siad Bare's forces launched an all out attack on SNM units in those two towns. Some 14,000 people were killed and tens of thousands sought refuge over the border in Ethiopia. All settled on Isaq clan territory in eastern Ethiopia, in the camps of Daror Kam Abokor and Rabaso to the east of Aware and around Hartisheik , some 91 km south-east of Jijiga. For logistical purposes the Harshin camp was moved in the late 80's by the UNHCR and the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) to become Hartisheik B. Hartisheik rapidly became one of the biggest refugee camps in the world. Located in an open plain with little water and little agriculture, it received an open relief operation with food coming through the Djibouti and water being tankered from Jijiga and Kebri Bayeh area. The response by UNHCR and the Ethiopian authorities was poor with food rations providing much less than the minimum calorie requirement for much of the initial year. ARRA has been overseeing the camps, the general distribution of rations and the health facilities. Oxfam set up and maintains water storage systems in the camp, while SCF(United Kingdom) runs the supplementary feeding and the community health care programme. The UNHCR funds the ARRA, CARE and other programs and participates in the registration and screening of refugees. They coordinate the whole program. A new wave of refugees arrived in late 1990 as Siad Bare's forces were being defeated in Mogadishu. Many ended up in camps around Dollo in the south and around Kalafó and Godey in the Ogaden. Large numbers were also taken in by relatives in the rural areas, without any outside help. Siad Bare's defeat gave opportunity to the SNM to establish control over the northwest area Somalia, which was declared thereafter as the Republic of Somaliland. Mostly urban Isaq clan members were repatriated from Hartisheik to Hargeisa in the summer of 1991. Having said that, the SNM sent back the Ethiopian Somali refugees based in northwest Somalia, mostly Darod, who had been enlisted by Siad Bare in his conflict against the SNM clan militia. Sections of the Gadabursi also fled after an SNM assault against Dila and Borama. Thus three new camps were set up, Derwenache and Awbare (Teferi Ber) on Gadabursi Dir clan territory and Kebri Bayeh on Abaskul Darod clan territory. In addition, pastoralists would seasonally or permanently move their women and children into the camps along the Shebele and east of Aware, and to a lesser degree Hartisheik and Kebri Bayeh. Fighting displaced Rer Bare villagers to Kalafó and Jarso and Geri agriculturalists to Jijiga and to the camps on Gadabursi clan territory. The camps and the movements of camp-dwellers were very much

controlled by the Ethiopian Government and army until their collapse in 1991. This followed a period of insecurity with tribal militias threatening aid workers and often clashing with each other so that relief convoys started deploying with armed EPRDF escorts. By early and mid-1992 the initial critical phase was over and it seemed as if both camp dwellers and aid agencies had settled into a routine of good maintenance namely when the question of the resettlement of the returnees was raised as well as the important and urgent need to support the communities who had already taken on the hosting of these moving populations and would now be expected to support more. This policy development became known as the cross mandate approach.

The cross-mandate policy : The theory

There were three main reasons for advocacy of the cross-mandate policy by UNHCR's Regional Office in the Ethiopian capital, Addis:

- i) The camp populations better received treatment in comparison with the equally suffering host population
- ii) The impossibility of extending the promise to a smaller number of Ethiopian Somali refugees in Somalia who had chosen to return that the UNHCR would provide a year's worth of food assistance, and an individual rehabilitation grant to the much larger number that had now fled;
- iii) The UNHCR's fear of another decade of assistance to Somali camp-dwellers, after what had been a negative experience with the camps in Somalia, which it was felt had only worsened dependency (UNHCR, 1992a, b; Refugee Policy Group, 1992:35-36). The UNHCR included assistance and is increasingly being extended to displaced people. The agency considered that, after paying an additional grant, have fulfilled its obligations and that the funds available for the rehabilitation grant could be better spent on regional recovery rather than as packages. It felt that it had no responsibility for the returnees and that, as Ethiopian citizens, they had to become the issue of the Ethiopian Government. The objective should be to close camps in Eastern Harar province. They are an anomaly and form poles of attraction which draw in large amounts of people and divert resources which could be used to develop the entire region. There has never been an issue of protection for refugees coming into Ethiopia. The government has an open door policy. For this reason it is better to assist refugees through the host populations through the provision of better services rather than continue the problem by keeping people in these camps. Camps are nothing more than a convenience for

agencies providing relief assistance. They take away a refugee's self-respect and make him a dependent and a mere statistic (UNEPPG, 1992b:17). The policy as such was not entirely new. Labelling it as 'cross-mandate' only increased an understanding that had been present in years gone by. As noted earlier, the UNHCR rehabilitation programme specifically included returnees for certain activities, but on the whole was intended to strengthen the ecological capacity of the region. The Greater Ogaden Development Programme report, the outcome of an UNHCR mission in 1989 was much more explicit. In the expectation of the return of some 20,000 families, it stated that promoting economic development of the area as a whole 'would be the most effective means of achieving acceptable long-term rehabilitation of the target group and of increasing (or at least stabilizing) the human support capacity of this vast and fragile area'. Anticipating the cross-mandate approach it recommended that 'a programme to assist returnees only is neither practical nor desirable' (IFAD/UNHCR, 1989 Summary: 1). The UN cannot dictate policy in a host country, however which was a reality. The cross mandate policy had to be adopted by the new Government which agreed with the UN about the need for more assistance irrespective of whether a person was a refugee, a returnee or locally displaced by conflict. The Government documents do not mention closure of camps. They interpret the cross-mandate policy as a means of establishing a link between relief and rehabilitation and of agencies to start or expand rehabilitative programmes (RRC, 1992b:3). The objectives of the policy, as identified by the ARRA, carry a somewhat different emphasis : 'to restore the damaged eco-system and infrastructure of the refugee-hosting area, to promote income-generating activities for the large refugee populations, to start regional development activities to alleviate the strain on the socio-economic institutes of the host region and to promote self-reliance' (RRN Network Paper 4 50 1992). What went on between the government and the UN has not been made public but there must have been an issue of the camps and the levels of continued assistance to them. In mid 1992 the Ethiopian Herald announced an agreement between the RRC, the ARRA and the UNHCR but the actual Memorandum of Understanding was not enacted until the 6 November (RRC, 1992b). The government and the UN agreed, however, that the need in the region were such that no one agency would have sufficient capacity. The cross-mandate policy would lead to a pooling of financial and material resources, and a sharing of expertise among the varying agencies for the single common aim of assisting all the people in the area (RRC, 1992b:3). The way to achieve this would be vigorous

coordination between different levels within agencies and between the agencies. At the time some observers even hoped that the cross-mandate policy would come to provide a framework for cooperation between the operational and non-operational UN agencies such as the FAO and UNDP, between the UN family and other NGOs, and between international agencies and the host government. It is nothing new or particularly special, it simply means a system of programming that brings together resources from a number of agencies in a coordinated manner. For years within the UN family there has been plenty of discussion about coordination but, in reality, each agency has protected its area of expertise and responsibility. Past operations in the Horn of Africa have been characterized by a ... scramble by the operational arms of the UN to achieve the position of "lead agency". ... While the UN battles with itself for supremacy, there was never a hope of joining with the NGOs in any way. ... By very definition, under the cross-mandate approach there can be no UN lead agency, the government is very much in the driving seat, and is expected to provide leadership and coordination at all levels. (UNEPPG, 1992b:17).

- iv) Coordination and a commonality of policy under the cross-mandate approach would not only perform the programmes in-country but also the relief and rehabilitation assistance in nearby countries. In this part of the Horn where populations are highly mobile and international borders easily crossed, the notion of 'poles of attraction' was felt to apply not only to camps in-country but also to levels of assistance on different sides of borders. Better services in camps in northern Kenya, for example, could impede Ethiopians from returning and even be a 'pull' factor for more Ethiopians to seek refuge in Kenya. Regional coordination between neighbouring countries and adjacent UN programmes should therefore be stimulated to achieve assistance on both sides of borders. This too was not a new consideration. A UNICEF mission to the Ogaden area in 1980 reported : The UNHCR representative ... feels that on both humanitarian and pragmatic grounds a comprehensive approach is needed ; this would include assistance for both the displaced and affected population in Ethiopia thus reducing the incentive to swell the numbers of refugees in neighbouring countries. ... [The Ethiopian government] feels that the UN system is taking a one-sided view of the situation by launching a large-scale assistance programme in Somalia and doing almost nothing in Ethiopia. They feel that this will only aggravate the situation in attracting a large number of people to cross the border (quoted by Africa Watch, 1991:97).

The cross-mandate policy : The practice

Although in theory the cross-mandate policy offered assistance to all needy people, in practice its more immediate objective became the dispersal and resettlement of those who were registered as returnees and who were receiving UNHCR assistance in camps or in towns like Jijiga, Degahbur and Godey. The 'returnee RRN Network Paper 4 52 cards', on which the UNHCR's 1989 promise of a repatriation package had been, were to be declared redundant. Assistance would be provided on a 'community' basis, through community leaders and representatives who would assume responsibility for internal distribution among all the needy people, but in return for work rather than as a free hand-out. In Dolo, formerly Borana Province, some 70,000 refugees and locally displaced people had never been registered. Food was being distributed through the clan elders. The announcement that the returnee IDs were no longer valid was first made in the Ogaden. As was to be expected, returnees holding cards were angry and felt betrayed. Although in most places the situation calmed down and in some the resentment escalated. In 1992 the UNHCR representative in Godey was murdered and the UNHCR handed over the camps to the RRC which continued the food distributions; thereafter UNEPPG was to be the coordinating agency in Dolo and the Ogaden. The threats in Degahbur became such that the UNHCR closed its office there in the autumn of 1992. Again, the RRC continued some free food distribution there, and UN lorries transporting supplies to the Aware camps via Degahbur were harassed. Threats and harassment also occurred frequently in Kebri Bayeh camp which, as an exclusively returnee camp, had never received the same level of assistance as the other Jijiga camps. The UNHCR was sending Somali refugees belonging to the Darod clan to Kebri Bayeh and assistance to them while assistance to the returnees a hundred yards away was being cut down. However, declaring returnee cards invalid and so reducing the provision of rations does not lead people to disperse let alone resettle in an organised way. The first organised dispersal and resettlement operation took place in the summer of 1992 and concerned the Jarso and Geri, living in and around 9 adjacent villages northwest of Jijiga, in the area of the EIRPD irrigation project. The Geri are Somalis belonging to the Darod clan, while the Jarso are of Oromo descent. The Geri were originally pastoralists but then developed an interest in the produce of the sedentary lifestyle, where the Jarso whom they allowed and even invited to come and cultivate their land. The Geri claimed superior status and ownership rights to the land. Several generations ago both groups came to an agreement that regulated all matters of common interest. The first disruption of this unequal but solid relationship came with the Rural Land Proclamation of 1975. The Jarso seized the opportunity

to establish rights over the lands they were tilling and even competed for leadership positions in the local committees of Revolutionary Ethiopia. The relationship between the two groups suffered more during and after the Ogaden war. Both had militias within the WSLF who occasionally raided each other's lands. When Siad Bare armed the Darod in northwest Somalia against the SNM, the Geri militia was included but not the Jarso (Yusuf, 1993a). Heavy fighting between them broke out in 1991 and escalated over the next two months. Villages were extensively looted, livestock were sold for arms and the crops were looted or died from drought. Those who were displaced fled to the Sh Sharif camp near Jijiga. Smaller numbers congregated in Chinaksen, and Jarso and Geri then sought refuge on 'neutral' adjacent Gadabursi territory in Heregel, Jarre and Lefeisa. The Gadabursi, who dominate the adjacent Awbare district north of Jijiga and bordering with the Awdal Region of Somaliland, have opened the already existing camps of Derwanache and Teferi Ber to these two communities. In early 1992 concern was raised about the provision of services to these camps when the population of the whole area was affected by drought, ethnic conflict, underdevelopment and insecurity (UNEPPG, 1992a). Between 24 June and 10 July, the displaced Jarso and Geri in the Chinaksen and Jijiga camps returned to their homes to which food and water were being delivered. Those in Heregel would gradually trickle back over the next 12 months. Having successfully organized the resettlement of the Jarso and Geri, the UN now hoped to repeat the operation for the returnees and displaced people in the older camps of Derwenache, Teferi Ber (Awbare), Kebri Bayeh and Babile, and those living in Jijiga town. The Red Cross decided to limit itself to the rehabilitation programme with the Jarso and Geri. SCF took time to develop its analysis of the situation and to prepare itself for a resettlement programme in Region 5. It joined in actively only in the summer of 1993 for a variety of region-wide projects, involving agricultural, veterinary supplies, logistical and managerial training on market analysis. In 1992 UNHCR/RRC food-for-work schemes had led to the reconstruction of some schools by local communities.

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